# EXPRESS

Stories of resilience among parents who live in poverty



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無窮世界 World Without Poverty

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# IN THIS ISSUE

### P.1

- Message from the Director General
- P. 2

Smile at the world

The descendant of a leprosy patient

P. 3 - 7

See the world

Winnie, a resilient single mother, Hong Kong

Shabana, a struggling but persevering mum, Bangladesh

Sanida, an inspiring woman leader, Malawi

Manisha Bishwokarma, a studious outcaste, Nepal

Ali, Yasmin and Aryam, extraordinary parents, Yemen

#### P. 8

 Legacy giving – a way to extend your love

P.9-12

2021/22 Annual Summary

- P.13
- We are Oxfamers!
   Meet our regular donor recruitment ambassadors

Acknowledgements

#### Dear Oxfam friends,

What is it like to be a parent when you're struggling to make ends meet? In this issue of the Oxfam Express, we'll bring you stories of resilience among parents who live in poverty.

Parents in poverty are like parents anywhere else in the world. But there is something extraordinary about them. They have livelihood struggles and challenges to overcome, and children to worry about. No matter how tough life is though, they would still do anything to take care of their children. Their astounding resilience powers them towards one goal: breaking the chains of poverty in their generation so their children can have a better future.

At Oxfam, we are supporting these parents to eradicate poverty. Through one of our key approaches – empowerment – we provide poor communities with skills and confidence so that they can work their way out of poverty, together. We also empower women and girls to achieve gender equality.

17 October is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty – it is an occasion for people to gather, renew their commitment, and express their solidarity with people living in poverty. In Hong Kong, we launched our second Rethink Poverty campaign in October. From 18 to 23 October 2022, eight local partners took part in the Rethink Poverty • Empowerment Market held at Central Market. Our aim was to highlight the importance of partnership and empowerment in the fight against poverty. Over the next six months, we'll continue to unpack what partnership and empowerment looks like, and how you can take part!

With warm regards,

al inaty

Kalina Tsang Director General



# The descendant of a leprosy patient

Name: Yu Xingxiang, Yang Huaxian Age: Both are 42 years old Country: Guangnan County, Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China Family members: Two children

Our village used to be called Leprosy Village. My mother died from the disease when I was four. My father raised us alone. At that time, we were poor and often went to bed hungry. As descendants of leprosy patients, we faced a lot of discrimination. People from nearby villages refused to let us go to school with their children. That's why I could only finish primary three.

I worked as a migrant worker in Zhejiang and Guangdong with my wife for many years. We worked for 12 hours a day, 26 days a month. The factory owner always found an excuse to deduct our salaries. We endured all the unfair treatment because we needed the jobs to raise our children and support their education. After we got a bit older, we decided to come back to the village. Oxfam supported us with training on ecological vegetable growing. I plan to raise pigeons and grow vegetables for an income. Although we earn less now, we can enjoy a healthy life. It's worth it.

Oxfam also helped revitalise our village by providing companion services for the elderly and children, building sewage systems, public activity rooms and toilets, and solar-powered bathrooms. My wife is a member of the project management team. She wants to contribute to the development of the village, I am proud of her!

### SEE THE WORLD

# A RESILIENT SINGLE MOTHER\_



### WINNIE, HONG KONG

Winnie is a single mother who has three sons. Two of them are students with special educational needs. She has not been able to find a stable job since the outbreak of COVID-19. In addition to financial pressure, social distancing and staying at home for long periods of time have taken a toll on Winnie and her sons' mental health. Winne said, 'We felt like we were trapped in a cage. One of my sons was unable to adapt to Zoom classes, and this really affected his academic performance.'

Winnie participated in the 'Mindful MaMa' project supported by Oxfam early this year and received training on mindfulness and art

therapy. 'The skills I learnt have helped me deal with stress and better communicate with my sons. I came to understand that when children have behavioural problems, parents should avoid confronting or scolding them right away. Instead, we should listen patiently, and encourage them to express their feelings. I have always enjoyed doing volunteer work. I hope to apply what I learn after completing the training and internship. My goal is to work as a junior instructor. I hope to provide mental health support for parents and children in distress through mindfulness activities. I also hope that I can have more opportunities to earn an income, and be self-reliant.'

# DID YOU KNOW

According to a study by The Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong in 2021, the overall happiness index of children in Hong Kong scored below 7 (out of 10) for the first time, indicating that children in Hong Kong were facing enormous pressure from academic and extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, over 50 per cent of women from low-income backgrounds experienced symptoms of anxiety and

depression. The lack of services and ways for women to express their feelings have left many to bottle up their emotions. (Source: Society for Community Organization report)

Women and children from low-income backgrounds have long been a major focus of Oxfam Hong Kong's (OHK's) local advocacy work. We work with our local partners to empower women so they can improve their lives.

# A STRUGGLING BUT PERSEVERING MUM



### SHABANA, BANGLADESH

On 24 April 2013, an eight-story building called Rana Plaza collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh, killing more than 1,000 people, most of them female garment workers. Shabana is a survivor of the disaster.

Shabana came to Dhaka to work as a garment worker due to poverty. She recalled, 'I was reluctant to work at the factory in Rana Plaza because I knew it was unsafe, but I needed to earn money to send my children to school. Every day, when it was 5 pm, I would feel bad and struggled if I should work overtime. I would think, when could I go home and see my children. Anyone who worked in the factory had the same struggle.' At that time, no matter how hard she worked, Shabana could only earn a monthly salary of about HK\$248, which was too meagre and could not meet her basic needs.

The collapse of the building seriously traumatised Shabana mentally. In order to make a living, she found a job at another garment factory. She said, 'Every day, I wake up my children at dawn. I cook for them, then go to work at 6:30 am, and go home at 10 pm.'

Oxfam launched the What She Makes campaign to tackle inequality in the fashion industry and demand big clothing brands to pay a living wage to the women who make our clothes.

Shabana wants her children to have a bright future: 'I have worked hard before, and I will work harder so that they can have more education.'

# DID YOU KNOW

Over the past 30 years, OHK has supported some of the poorest people in Bangladesh, particularly women, landless people, labourers, elderly people and people who are marginalised and are vulnerable to natural disasters to improve their lives.



# AN INSPIRING WOMAN LEADER



### SANIDA, MALAWI

Sanida is an inspiring woman in her community. She was the leader of a mothers' health group supported by Oxfam.

Sanida said, 'I nearly lost my child to malnutrition some years ago. It was the hardest time of my life. I am now seven months pregnant. I have learnt in training what type of food children need and what an expecting mother should eat to stay healthy.'

She wanted to help people in her community who cannot read or write to learn the importance of health and sanitation. So, she mobilised members in the group to produce a series of skits and songs so that people learn how to take care of their children and their health through watching and listening.

'Things in our community have improved. We only see one child per month having diarrhoea or malaria because we have educated ourselves on the importance of using mosquito nets. Our dream is to eradicate malnutrition from this community through improving sanitation, hygiene and spreading information on the importance of healthy diet,' Sanida said confidently.



Community members performing skits they put together about nutritional health and sanitation.

# DID YOU KNOW

Located in Southern Africa, Malawi is a landlocked country. Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world and its economy has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. OHK has worked in Malawi for more than 20 years. We strive to help poor communities there develop sustainable livelihoods and promote gender justice through women's development and empowerment.

# A STUDIOUS OUTCASTE\_

On one of our group discussions, we learnt about various social protection programmes, and I came to realise that I have to fight for the rights of my children.

### MANISHA BISHWOKARMA, NEPAL

In Nepal, being from a dalit (untouchable) family and living in poverty means that one has to live an undignified life with very limited resources.

Manisha got married five years ago. She has two daughters. Because she never had a chance to go to school, she was not aware of her rights as a citizen. It was only after she joined Oxfam's women's empowerment project and started participating in various discussions that she came to understand the importance of registering her citizenship and marriage certificates and her daughters' birth certificates. She also learnt about gender-based violence, caste discrimination, inequality, women's participation and leadership, as well as social Inclusion. She said, 'I was never aware of these subjects before. Now, I understand that women need to actively participate in community affairs, have the courage to speak up and ask for government resources.'

Finally, after five years of marriage and with both our and our local partner's support, Manisha received her citizenship certificate and registered her marriage. She also obtained birth registration certificates for her children. Her children can now receive HK\$33 per month of nutrition allowance from the government.

# DID YOU KNOW

In Nepal, like elsewhere, achieving gender equality is key to ending poverty. Though Nepalese women nowadays have more access to education, health care services and job opportunities, gender disparities remain. About two thirds of female adults are illiterate and sixty per cent of girls in Nepal do not have access to secondary education. OHK's sustainable development programmes in Nepal focus on gender justice, food and economic justice, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.



# EXTRAORDINARY PARENTS

### ALI, YASMIN AND ARYAM, YEMEN



Before the conflict, life was good. And now, life is difficult. We struggle to get by. Sometimes my children go to bed hungry, they get sick and tired. They have malnutrition. Every day, I go to the mountains to collect wood and sell it to buy food for my children.

— Ali

The ongoing war has made our lives very difficult. We had to flee our homes. Oxfam provided me with training on sewing. It also helped me grow my clothing business. I have more clients now, and my profits increased which helped me provide proper education to my children and cover my household expenses.

noto: Kaff Media/Oxfam

Photo: Kaff Media/Oxfam

- Yasmin

Photo: Kaff Media/Oxfam

I am a single mother. My daughter suffers from a sore ear, which needs to be washed every month. I had to sell my home furniture to buy medicine and some food for my children.

There are more than 60,000 internally displaced persons in this area, and we are living in harsh conditions while lacking essential needs and we have no income. No matter how difficult life is, I will not take my children out of school. I am always optimistic and I hope that the conflict will end soon so that we can start all over again.

- Aryam (name changed)



Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East, and has been plagued by conflict for more than seven years. More than 20 million people in the country are in need of humanitarian and protection assistance. Oxfam has provided displaced persons like Aryam and Ali and vulnerable families of the host community with emergency cash assistance to buy food, water and medicine. We also support vulnerable women to develop sustainable livelihoods, and campaign for lasting peace.

# I WILL GIVING -A WAY TO EXTEND YOUR LOVE\_

Name Oxfam Hong Kong as a beneficiary in your will. Your legacy to Oxfam will help fight poverty for years to come and help create a better world.

### LEAVE BEHIND A STORY LIKE NO OTHER

Milly, an Oxfam Hong Kong monthly donor and future legacy donor, shares her thoughts.

In my work, I have come into contact with many underprivileged families, and know that many of them need support. When a family member passed away a few years ago, I started to think about making a will and handle financial matters. I also want to lead by example and encourage relatives and friends to make wills and donate part of their legacy to Oxfam Hong Kong to help build a better future for poor people. Death is unescapable and inevitable, but there are ways to continue making a positive impact on the world even after our time is over. Let's leave a will gift to end poverty!

### HOW TO CREATE YOUR WILL

Oxfam Hong Kong is collaborating with ForeverGift, a legacy giving platform, to promote legacy giving through their will-making service. You can make a will with the help of their solicitors and are invited to include Oxfam Hong Kong in your will. To make your will for free, please register through one of the methods below and use the code OFHK-FREE2022:

感謝狀

后於亡文符(進華農業)的幾時,透過訂立連構,当 世界際進度和目標情報,為強人物並希望,也於於 学者常是中







# OVER THE PAST YEAR, OXFAM HONG KONG



# **FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



### **FINANCIAL POSITION**

Assets and Liabilities	HK\$'000	Reserves
Non-current assets	50,798	Restricted funds
Property, plant and equipment	50,798	Operation reserve
Current assets	110,133	<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>
Inventories	25	
Prepayments, deposits and other receivables	4,306	
Cash and cash equivalents	105,802	
Current liabilities	27,250	
Accounts and other payable	13,106	
Grants payable	1,117	
Deferred revenue	13,027	
NET ASSETS	33,681	

These financial highlights are based on Oxfam Hong Kong's financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022. The full audited financial statements by KPMG are available on our website, www.oxfam.org.hk. All figures are in Hong Kong dollars.

# HUMANITARIAN RELIEF



### DELIVERING LIFESAVING SUPPORT TO OVER 94,000 PEOPLE IN EAST AFRICA

Oxfam has been responding to the severe food crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia with a combination of food and cash for people to meet nutritional needs. We've also been supporting their livelihoods and strengthening communities' resilience, from providing livestock fodder and seeds for drought resistant crops, to building and repairing water and sanitation facilities.



### DISTRIBUTED 36,000 COVID TEST KITS WHEN THEY WERE NEEDED MOST

When the fifth wave of COVID-19 hit Hong Kong in early 2022, Oxfam got to work right away and supported low-income families and workers. We offered everything from rapid antigen test kits for outsourced cleaning workers to 'Oxfam Rice', which we distributed to low-income families and the unemployed.

# **GENDER JUSTICE**



### TEACHING ASSISTANTS REACH HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS, ONE STEP CLOSER TO ACHIEVING DREAMS

We've created a teaching assistant training programme to offer women from ethnic minority backgrounds the opportunity to use their language skills – which are an incredible asset – to expand their career options. Through the programme, which we've run for the first time, students learn teaching skills, gain internship experience at schools, receive a certificate that proves their credentials, and are offered support to find a job in the education sector.



### HELPING THOUSANDS IN MAINLAND CHINA SEE PAST DISABILITY

To break the stereotypes around marginalised women with disabilities (WWDs) and promote their social inclusion in China, we worked with two of our partners to collect stories about WWDs, and set up exhibitions in Beijing and Yantai in 2021. The exhibitions showcased powerful images and stories of WWDs in the workplace and how they're trying to live their dreams; together with online communications, over 2,000 people learnt about the challenges WWDs face. Aside from exhibitions, we also organise other initiatives, like theatre trainings, so beneficiaries of the project can be empowered and build up a mutual support network.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY



### FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH OVER 2,000 QINGHAI HERDERS

Although herders in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau have generations of wisdom on how to deal with harsh weather, climate change is putting them and their livelihoods at increased risk. To combat this, we've been working with our partners to assist about 2,000 herders cope with climate change since 2016. We've collected information about what they know about dealing with the effects of climate change, and worked with communities to restore grasslands for grazing. We also worked with the community's women to develop handicraft products to diversify their livelihoods.



# BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE WITH THOUSANDS OF STREET CLEANERS AND SUBDIVIDED FLAT TENANTS

To urge the government to help the poorest in Hong Kong adapt to climate change, we published two studies on climate change's effects on street cleaners and those who live in subdivided flats in 2021. The Labour Department has since agreed to consider strengthening the arrangement of surprise inspections. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department also accepted our proposal to include a clause on the protection of street cleaners in their tender documents for new outsourced cleaning services. We also urged the government to build public housing as soon as possible and offer additional resources to help subdivided flat tenants cope with extreme weather.

## SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN JUST ECONOMIES



### EMPOWERING DOZENS OF WOMEN THROUGH FOOD RESCUES

Many women who live in poverty in Macau lack livelihood skills to lift themselves out of poverty. Through our food rescue project though, we've partnered with three organisations to rescue food from wet markets and distribute them to people in need. We also recruit women from low-income backgrounds to help rescue food, and offer them some of what they've rescued. We also empower them by, for instance, providing basic skills training to boost their self-confidence and connecting them with people in the community.



### DELIVERING SAFETY TO DELIVERY WORKERS THROUGH SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN

Many delivery workers face low pay and poor treatment, and are at high risk of occupational injury. In Mexico, our successful engagement campaign 'Promises on Wheels' placed this issue on the media and public agendas, and opened up a space for dialogue with digital platforms, government authorities, workers and consumers. Delivery workers also learnt practical, everyday skills through the campaign, including first aid, bike maintenance, how to reduce the risk of sexual violence especially for female delivery workers, and how to file their taxes.

### WE ARE OXFAMERS

# MEET OUR REGULAR DONOR RECRUITMENT AMBASSADORS

You may have met them at a shopping mall, exhibition hall, MTR station, on the street or at a bus stop. Our regular donor recruitment ambassadors are the bridge between OHK and the general public. They explain our poverty alleviation work to the public and invite them to join us build a world without poverty as monthly supporters.



(Left to right) Our regular donor recruitment ambassadors Cheung, YoYo, Ching and Joe.



I think my work is meaningful, because by helping people understand our work and inviting them to support us, we can run longer-term poverty alleviation projects and help more people fight against poverty and become independent. So, it is important to share the correct information to the public, and never mislead them.

I am enthusiastic and passionate about my work. There are many unforgettable and moving experiences. For example, there was one time we were recruiting donors on a street in Tsim Sha Tsui. It was very hot that day, and after working for two or three hours, someone from a nearby coffee shop brought us two cups of coffee. As we cannot accept gifts, I politely declined the offer. In the end, they put the coffees beside our supply bag. I was very touched! There are also unhappy experiences. A while ago, a passerby suddenly rushed in front of me and spit on me. I was very upset. Since then, I keep reminding myself to be careful of any potential risk during work.

I hope that people will get to know more about our work as regular donor recruitment ambassadors and show more respect. There are many people who offer their skills to contribute to society, like street cleaners and health workers. Our work seems insignificant, but we also work hard to play a part in building a better world.

As we represent 0xfam to the public, I think it is important to share with them correct information, and not to gain their support through misleading or exaggerated stories. Every day, we encounter people from all walks of life, we are used to being ignored and misunderstood. When someone is impolite and rude to us, or even physically aggressive, we will keep calm and stay professional. We will not argue with them or fight back though we feel upset.



Last but not least, no matter how challenging my job can be, I will not give up because it not only enables me to be self-reliant, but also help people in need at the same time.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (in alphabetical order).

Companies/organisations that organised beneficiary events to support Oxfam's work

Macau 853 Plus ArtsBite Banco Comercial de Macau Foto Nice MOUW Coffee PizzaExpress Macau Pui Ching Middle School Studio StarMusic Centre

### Companies/organisations with an Oxfam donation box

Macau Basiclife Limited Banco Comercial de Macau Café Falala CARNES CONGELADAS FAT KEI D'light Dessert Café HardChill Thai Fusion Pride Up International Trading and Investment Co., Ltd. Royal Supermarke Company Limited Sei Kee Cafe Tai Lei Loi Pork Chop Bun Thai Master Traditional Chicken Rice The Joy of Living Café Oxfam partners recruitment campaign - exhibition area sponsorship (April to October 2022) <u>Hong Kong</u> Central Market Exhibition Group Limited GWC Capital Partners

Laguna Plaza Link Asset Management Limited MCP One

TKO Plaza <u>Macau</u>

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